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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

PART 63.

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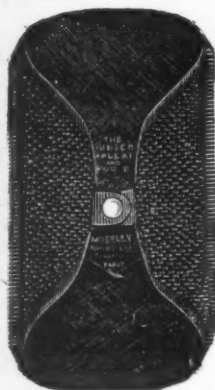
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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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MARRIED TO ORDER.

A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "Joan Vellacot," "A Woman of Forty," "Kestell of Greystone," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII. LUCK TURNS.

AFTER this, Penzie's smiles came more readily. She went out a great deal, but it was only when she met Forster Bethune that she cared about her gaieties. The world called her proud, but asked her all the more to join in its amusements.

She received several offers, which she refused after referring them to her uncle, who invariably found that the lovers were not rich enough. Penelope did not trouble herself at all about them. Her uncle decided for her, and she was not inclined to remonstrate. In truth the admirers did not give her any uneasiness. Mrs. Todd, who guessed the truth, dared not question Miss Winskell; there being something about her which stopped even that loquacious lady. Society, however, said that the Princess was much more agreeable than she had been at first. She managed to be charming as well as beautiful, having at last learnt the secret of speaking much and meaning little. At first she was impatient of it all, now she was sorry as the days passed away, especially if she had not met Forster Bethune. She was also very friendly with Philip Gillbanks, and she was constantly meeting him. In fact he seemed to know by intuition where she would be found, and by some means or other he would be there. They talked chiefly about Forster and his doings, or rather Philip talked and she smiled and listened. Philip believed that she was

interested in hearing about the work which occupied the friends, and he even told Forster that the Princess was at heart one of his disciples. This soon brought Forster to her side, and then Penzie's whole countenance changed, though no one noticed it. The very sound of his voice brought strange enchantment. She did not call her feeling by any name, and she did not argue about it. She did not even know that what she felt was the sweet folly called love, and Forster himself did not guess why he was glad when she took such a decided interest in his various hobbies. But he made his mother ask the Winskells to dinner, so that Adela should make friends with the beautiful Princess.

Penelope gave up a dance at Lord Farrant's in order to go to the Bethunes' dinner-party, much to Mrs. Todd's surprise, but Penzie instantly declared that her uncle liked dinner-parties, and this served as an excuse.

On that evening she took a long time over her toilet, though she was not usually very anxious about her appearance. She tried on two dresses before she could decide which suited her best. Never before in all her life had Penzie been consciously vain.

When she came downstairs ready dressed, Mrs. Todd exclaimed:

"I declare, Miss Winskell, you are the only person who could look well in that pale brown dress, but it really suits you; only would not your blue silk be more suitable for the occasion?"

"The Bethunes are very simple people," said Penelope; "they are not like the rest of society, who look at people's clothes before they look at their faces."

"I must say I like well-dressed women. It's all very well for people who are rich

to go about looking dowdy, but it doesn't do to be shabby when you have a limited income."

Mrs. Todd was going to dine with some friends of hers, as Penelope did not require her. The widow declared privately to them that she was delighted to be free of the Princess.

"She is very beautiful, very calm, and really gracious. She is clever, too, but she has no heart," said Mrs. Todd to an old friend, who answered candidly:

"You were not troubled with too much heart yourself, Louisa."

"Oh, well! I never pretended that I wished to be poor, but this strange girl actually told me she was going to marry for money."

In the meanwhile Penelope was happily awaiting her uncle, who returned rather late to dress for the dinner-party.

When he entered she noticed a shade of gravity on his usually beaming countenance.

"What is the matter, uncle dear? We are alone, and for a few hours we shall be happy."

He held her at arms' length and smiled.

"The matter is that I have kept you waiting, and the Bethunes will be impatient."

Penelope did not say more; indeed, after the short drive was over; she forgot her momentary anxiety—especially as she suddenly found herself in the midst of the Bethunes, with Forster himself talking to her. His mother and his sisters welcomed her with the pleasant courtesy which is rare in society, but which was habitual to them.

"We wanted you to ourselves, so Forster said we need not have a real party. There are only his friend Mr. Gillbanks and one or two more coming." This was Adela's remark, whilst Mrs. Bethune added:

"Forster says you are very sympathetic about his plans. It is very good of you, I'm sure. Of course we like his poor dear odd people. His cousins, the Rookwoods, don't approve of them; but you see they don't hear him talk about them as much as we do."

"There is Mr. Gillbanks, yes, and there are the Dewberys. You are to sit between Forster and his friend so that they may make sure of your conversion! Mother, don't forget that General Dewbery takes you in. Now and then mother seizes the arm of the wrong man, and we have to part them by force."

Penelope found everything delightful. The Bethunes realised in their home life

all that she naturally appreciated, and all that she had learnt to appreciate since she had known them. Philip's sallies brought out Forster's clever retorts and his greater idealism. Philip was ever ready to efface himself before Forster's more sparkling intellect, and it was evidently because of this that he received Penelope's frequent smiles. Forster did not insist on airing his views because they were his views, but simply because his whole soul was in his cause and he spoke out of the abundance of his heart.

After dinner Mary Bethune was induced to play, and this was almost a revelation to the Princess, whose music had no more art in it than that given her by nature, a true ear, and a sweet voice.

This evening she dimly realised the happiness of the Bethunes' family life. She had never seen anything like it before, and it came to her like a revelation of something great, pure, and beautiful—something she had never enjoyed herself, but of which Forster Bethune was really worthy.

"I have no talent," she said during the evening to Adela, who was fascinated by her beauty. "Your sister is a wonderful musician."

"You can inspire musicians," was the answer, "that is far better. Forster said the other day that the club-men to whom you spoke are still talking about you."

Penelope did not reply; she was thinking of Forster, and wondering vaguely whether he really cared about anything beyond his poor people.

Mr. Bethune and the Duke were very happy recalling old friends; everybody was merry and amusing with that merri-ment that comes of guilelessness, and which cannot be counterfeited.

Penelope was in a sweet dream, and listened with a smile on her lips when Dora joined in the conversation.

"You know we are all rather stupid about Forster, but really it is Mr. Gillbanks who keeps the machinery oiled. Now and then Forster does think of impossible things."

"But he says that Forster is a splendid general and pioneer," put in Adela.

"I am sure he is," murmured Penelope, looking across the room to where Forster was engaged in eager conversation with her uncle, Philip standing close beside him. When it was time to go Penelope was sorry, though usually she was glad that her evening parties were over. She had wandered into a pleasant fairyland

of home happiness such as she had never before experienced, and for a time she had forgotten her life object. These people were not rich, but they were happy. Penelope looked at the picture as a London child might gaze at green fields or at vast forests for the first time in its life. When they were in the hall, and her uncle was talking to Philip Gillbanks, Forster stood close beside her, and suddenly he paused in a brilliant description of a thieves' lodging-house. Penelope looked up to see the reason of his pause, and, as their eyes met, both smiled.

"I stopped because the contrast between you standing here and the sight I have seen to-day in that den came over me so forcibly," he said.

"Does not the contrast between yourself and them strike you?" she asked with a sigh.

"No. I never have time to think of it. Besides, what is the difference? Merely one of accident of birth."

"But that is such a vast difference, it is everything."

"When you had learnt to care about these people as human beings you would forget it too."

"Oh, no. I don't think I should."

"I'm sure you would," he said simply.

"It is because you have never thought about it. In the next generation women will play an important part in all public affairs; then we shall expect them to be real helpers."

"A woman can do so little," said the Princess humbly. She was softened, feeling that she, too, could be another woman if Forster Bathune wished her to change.

"I shall call to-morrow, if I may, and show you some plans Gillbanks has had prepared for us. We want to attach a dwelling house to our club-room, where ladies will come and spend some time. We don't want them to do much, but just to lead their quiet lives there, and to let the poor men see something beautiful. They do not realise that a woman's greatest power lies in being herself."

"They might be disappointed if they knew more of us; but do come."

For one moment he kept hold of her hand, and Penzie felt a thrill of happiness.

"Thank you," he said; "I shall come. You are very good."

Philip came up to her at this moment, and his face said more than his words

when he heard that Forster had promised to show her the plans. He fancied she was already a firm disciple.

"May we call it the Palace?" he asked. "It will remind me of my first visit to you."

"No," said Forster quickly. "Gin is the only idea that our people have in connection with a palace. The Princess must live there first to make them change their ideas."

Penelope and the Duke drove home in silence. She was so full of her own thoughts that she did not notice his unusual silence. When they reached home the Duke gently drew Penzie into the drawing-room.

"Come in here, child, I want to talk to you; we must soon be going home again."

Penzie started a little as she stood near the window and gazed at the cold moonlight. How glad she would have been to have heard this some time ago; now it seemed merely to give her pain.

"But, uncle, we cannot go before——"

She paused, unable as formerly to talk openly about the important topic.

"I have not quite calculated all our plans, Penzie; but beyond this week we must not stay."

Penzie knew then what he meant.

"Oh, uncle, the expense you mean. I had almost forgotten."

"I have not been quite so fortunate as I was at first; but we have succeeded, child, we have met the world on its own ground, and no one has known we are beggars."

Penzie lifted her head proudly.

"No one has even guessed it. Only, how you managed to hide it has been a mystery to me."

"Has it?" The Duke touched the girl's fair cheek and smiled. "I meant it to be a mystery, but you shall know all to-morrow. You have a right to know that you have succeeded."

"Succeeded?" murmured Penelope, a cold chill creeping into her heart.

"Yes, child, you were bound to do that, only I was hoping for better things, and I waited."

"I have done as you told me; I refused those foolish offers."

"Yes, yes, they were mere windbags. Now you must finish your task. Are you still of the same mind?"

"Yes, quite of the same mind," said Penzie in a low voice, because she doubted her own words.

"You will act, Penzie, and say nothing. You have always done that."

Penzie slowly raised her eyes to the moon swept by clouds. Why was a chilly feeling creeping over her? Before she had been quite ready. She was still and she would be perfectly obedient.

"Of course I shall. Tell me."

"To-morrow, child, to-morrow. Good night, my Princess."

CHAPTER XIII. THE END OF THE QUEST.

PENELOPE was alone in her room. The end to which she had always looked forward with such a steady gaze was nearly reached, but she was still to walk blindfold; she was not to see it till the next day. All at once she started, and her face was diffused with a hot blush.

Forster had said he would come! It was Forster that her uncle meant. He loved her, and she loved him. That was the solution of the riddle, and through her duty had come her happiness—a new, strange happiness which she had never known or understood before. All the mysteries of life seemed unfolded before her; all that was perfect and beautiful on earth had come to her. This was the secret of the poets—the meaning of so much that she had read, but which her proud nature had never before understood.

She knelt down by the arm-chair and spoke the word softly: "Forster, Forster." She could be humble for his sake; she would do as he bade her; she would go among his poor people, the people he loved, and she would learn their ways, and he would teach her how she could help them—she and Forster together. Then her mind flew back to the family circle she had just left, full of mutual trust and confidence. That was all new to her, strange and beautiful. Her love for her uncle was not at all like this. She had loved him because he had taught her and cared for her, but it was the love of a devoted pupil more than the love of a child. In the future she would have that family life to help her. Forster's people would be her people. They must teach her how to help him, who thought so little about himself. She would be proud to be his disciple and to follow him. The old home would be restored by one who would care for it because it was her home, and—

Before this Penelope Winskell had been merely the fair temple of an idea; she had not perfectly developed. This

night, as she rested her head against her arm, she felt that she was changed, that her heart of stern resolve was taken from her, and that instead she received the heart of a woman, strong and steadfast in love. She laughed softly at her former self. The ideal had been grand. She did not wish it altered; but this state of existence was far grander.

She loved. She loved Forster, and he was worthy of being loved.

She did not understand him yet; he differed from her as much as day from night; but she recognised something in him that was superior to anything she had ever known. Men had seemed to her early experience beings of meaner substance than herself, except her uncle, who was her master. She had been quite wrong, for now she felt that she knew a man incapable of base ideas or of anything vile. Women were really the inferior beings, and she, a foolish girl, had encouraged her pride because her ignorance had been great. In future she would try to learn the right estimate in which men and women should be held. She had much to learn, but now her eyes were open. The great world was made up of men and women, in whom Forster believed because they were his fellow-creatures. To her it was a wonderful and startling creed, but it was his creed, and she would ask him to teach her.

The night crept on, but still Penelope sat there, dreaming through a world of happiness of which she could only seize the central idea. She loved, and was loved. She knew it now, that secret which the world kept so safely secured from the reach of meaner natures. She had never understood it before. It was utterly different from anything she had ever experienced or imagined.

Then at last she fell asleep just where she was, and the sunlight came to kiss her awake, and, startled, she jumped up and laughed as she had never laughed before.

Life was beautiful, and the sun was beautiful, and London was a fairy home of delight, but she must hide everything from Mrs. Todd. Mrs. Todd! Penelope was sure she had never loved and that she knew nothing about it. That was why she was so unsympathetic and so very uninteresting.

She dressed herself hastily and hid all traces of having kept such a long vigil. She was strong and not easily tired, so, with a smile on her face, she ran downstairs.

Mrs. Todd was alone in the dining-room. "Where is uncle?" Penelope exclaimed, for he always breakfasted with them.

"He begged me to tell you that he was called away on business, but that he would be in before luncheon to make up for his early disappearance."

Penelope was a little disappointed, but she said nothing.

"My dear Miss Winskell, you missed a delightful ball last night, for I went to the Farrants' after all. I found my friends were going, so I ran home to dress, and I assure you it was a perfect dance. But every one was angry at your non-appearance. One lady told me that she knew her brother had come on purpose to be introduced to the belle of the season."

Penelope raised her head in her usual haughty manner.

"I know enough of society now to know what it means, and indeed I was glad to avoid a crowded dance."

"The Bethunes are dear, eccentric people; still, they are not very lively when compared with the Farrants."

Penzie never argued a point with her chaperon. She busied herself with the tea, and felt herself slipping back into thought, which was hardly civil to Mrs. Todd.

"What made the dance more amusing was the fact of Mrs. McIntyre's presence. She never comes with her husband now. They say the two have agreed never to appear together."

"Why do they do that?" said Penzie absently.

"Dear, innocent Miss Winskell, really you ask delightful questions. She is a very modern lady, and has always a young man dangling after her. As to the husband, well, they came to words on the subject of a girl he admires immensely."

"It is very stupid of them to give cause for the senseless gossip of their neighbours."

"Senseless gossip! When people who are married behave like this, the world talks of course, but it's my belief that the world would be very unhappy if no one gave them the chance of gossiping."

"I should be too proud to show what I felt."

"You indeed! I quite imagine that you would say nothing, but few are as brave as you are. I was not at all happily married, but I took care to let every one know it. It was some comfort. If I had held my peace I should have received no sympathy, perhaps only blame."

"Our family has always been taught to suffer in silence."

"It never pays, though it looks well. Will you come to see Taffnell's pictures this morning? Every one is talking of them; it is the fashionable topic."

"I think I will stay indoors till luncheon time, my uncle may come in early; but don't let me hinder you. I should like to be alone this morning. I really want a rest."

"I am going to the dressmaker, and I shall enquire about your dress for the Barristers' Ball."

"Thank you," said Penzie absently. She was thinking of something quite different.

She was restless this morning, though she tried to occupy herself with writing to her father, very much doubting if he would ever read the letter; then she looked out of the window, wondering why her uncle did not return; and lastly she felt a deep blush overspread her face when she heard a ring at the door. Was it Forster Bethune? and what had he come to say? The past and the future seemed to be blotted out; she was like one in a dream who does not know what will come next, but is passively prepared for whatever happens.

When Forster was really introduced, she felt that it was quite natural, and that she had long been expecting him. Her heart gave a bound of joy.

"I am so glad you have not gone out yet," he said simply. "I have brought the plans for you to see. May I sit down?"

They had both been standing near the window. Penelope sat down with unusual obedience on her part. She had never before felt that she must obey any one except her uncle. Forster drew some papers out of his pocket and began unfolding them, then suddenly he paused and looked at the beautiful face before him.

"I should like to tell you of a dream I had. I fancied that you would be a great power among your fellow-creatures; that your beauty would be a very visible picture to them, showing them all that is good and pure; and that if you would join us in the fight against sordid humanity, together we might realise great things."

"How could I?" said Penzie almost under her breath.

"You would soon recognise the impossibility of caring about society, the world,

or whatever you call it, when once you had taken in the oneness of humanity. It would become as impossible to you to spend—" he paused and smiled—one of those smiles which spurred on others to self-sacrifice—"money on your dress that was not absolutely necessary. You would reject luxury for love of those whose mental capacity had not reached your own level. Your title of Princess, to be real, must be earned among your village brothers and sisters. You must be their Princess. Will you do all this? I know you are capable of great things."

"Yes, yes, I could do it," said Penzie, suddenly rising and standing near the window, where the scent of mignonette was wafted in upon the warm breeze.

"I knew you could. I want you for this work, but as it is useless to begin if you turn back, you must not answer at once."

Penzie looked at him now. Was it only the work he meant? He was close beside her, and took her unresisting hand.

"Penelope—it is a name which means so much. I would give you all I can give to a woman, a part of my life's work. A man's wife is the crown to his labour; one with him and with his thoughts. I would never degrade your beautiful womanhood by making you a man's plaything, Penelope. You are a queen by right of your womanhood, having inherited all that your sisters are striving still to gain."

It was a very strange courtship, but Penelope did not think so, and did not notice its unreality. Her heart had never before been touched, and all Forster's words were to her as the words of a prophet.

"But your money," she said slowly; "could you give me that?"

Forster misunderstood her.

"Yes, yes, of course. You would have as much right as I have myself to say how it should be spent. Simplicity is a man's greatest help to a nobler life. To live without money is to live twice."

Penelope liked this ideal; it suited her present frame of mind. But she felt that she must make it plain that if she lived in poverty, her husband's money must belong to her family. She had never believed it possible that she should have love as well. She had not known the meaning of the word as she knew it now. The revelation had come to her so suddenly that it seemed to alter her whole nature, and she shrank from being

more explicit in her words. She was sure that Forster would have enough for the needs of the Winskell estate, if they themselves lived simply, as he suggested. Indeed, she had been used to nothing else, and it was only since her present visit that the manners and customs of the rich had become familiar to her. She had not rebelled, because she had believed that her own future would be certainly cast in the same mould; but Forster had opened out a new view of things, and that view included poverty.

The dream was beautiful; all the more so that it had developed itself like a wondrous flower which expands in a night, and is only perfected at sunrise.

She held out her hand to him shyly, and he took it, though he did not try to kiss her, but only held her hand firmly clasped.

A hansom drove rapidly to the door, and Penzie started.

"That is my uncle," she said. "Wait a few moments. I will go and meet him."

She walked slowly from the room, and met the Duke just entering the library.

"Penelope, come in here a moment, child. Who is there?" he asked, noticing a man's hat.

"Mr. Bethune."

"Ah!" He shut the library door, and took both her hands. "Penzie, my dear child, the luck is turned. We must leave London as soon as possible."

"The luck! What luck?"

"Mine; but it is of no consequence. My dear child, I have found your future husband."

Penzie blushed for the first time at this word.

"I know. I am ready to obey you, uncle. You know I am."

"I know; and really, considering all things, it's not bad. I have looked into all the affairs, and really Philip Gillbanks's fortune is as safe as the Bank of England."

Penzie repeated very slowly: "Philip Gillbanks?"

"Yes, his father is a millionaire."

THE SWEETS OF POPULARITY.

It may be doubted whether men crave popularity or wealth the more. True, the race for hard cash is about the most striking feature of life as we live it nowadays; but then what is at the back of that desire to be rich that seems innate in us

all? Is it a craving merely for beds of eider down, obsequious domestics, champagne every day, and carriages to drive about town in? Or is it the deep-ingrained yearning to make a large figure among one's contemporaries, to shine as a philanthropist or a politician, to become a byword, in fact, and a theme for newspaper comments?

Well, there is no denying that a good many of us have low, sensual ideas; and think of money as little better than the safest possible vehicle to carry us to domestic bliss and luxurious ease. Nevertheless, if you take three men, sound in body and mind, and of the average moral calibre, methinks two of the three would rate pounds, shillings, and pence for their effect in promoting the joys of the heart and the head, rather than of the stomach and the senses in general.

Mark at how early an age the appetite shows in us. A man need not be a father to know that a child is seldom so well pleased as when he is the nucleus of an admiring throng. I have seen a baby in arms as it were convulsed into ecstasy because a couple of other mothers had joined its own mother in apparent worship of its first budding tooth. Perhaps there was pain at the root of the tooth just at the time. If so, the pain was completely outmatched by the pleasure of being the butt of a little eulogistic notice.

One's first spell of school-days hurries the appetite smartly into a passion. Every school has its divinity, and his sway is often infinite in its own little sphere. I remember well how I, for one, revered the youth whose personality ruled the roost in the dormitory of the school to which I was promoted from the leading-strings of nurses. He was notable chiefly for an imperative manner, a fine vocabulary in abuse of the masters over us, a loud voice, a big body, and an amazing coolness in emergencies. When all's said, he had the making of a great man in him—at least, I fondly fancy so. But he has not come to the front among us bigger boys, though years back he had but to say "Do this," and it was done immediately.

He seemed to have a glorious career—in the dormitory. Yet perhaps he never fully appreciated the blessings that fortune had wreathed about his brow. He was then, I expect, like a strong man who has never allied: quite unconscious of the value of health. Probably, from babyhood upwards he had played the part of magnet—alluring

other though himself unmoved. Out of question he would have been astonished if one day all we youngsters had, by conspiracy, joined in neglecting him, and refused him his meed of admiration by deeds, words, and looks. The experience might have been as good for him as a bout of mild illness for the man who takes his health as a matter of course.

I am told that girls are much more susceptible to praise and reverential treatment even than boys. It seems hardly credible, but my informant—the mother of five girls and four boys—is in a good position to know. Certainly I have watched with interest how a knot of little maids will hang round one of their party, and worship her most palpably; and how her eyes have sparkled with delight in the homage. And I have seen with pain the sullen, lugubrious face of the girl whom none of her companions want to have anything to do with out of school hours, and the glances of envy with which she has acknowledged the superiority of the popular girl.

It is, perhaps, hard even for the accomplished coquette to say why she practises those peculiar aptitudes she has from Nature. I suppose, however, the truth of the matter is that she likes to be liked—thus differing not much from the rest of us. Yet if she is wise she would do well early in her decline to borrow a little from the pessimists, and convince herself of the fleeting nature of all mundane pleasures, and their insufficiency. She may thus both eat her cake and have it.

But it is among adult men that the craze for popularity is at its strongest. Whether in the world of letters, of sport or politics, popularity at all cost seems the goal aimed at.

There is in my town a very able lawyer, still in the prime of life. At twenty-five he was recognised in the district as a coming power—local or national, as he pleased. He was familiar with platforms, and he cut a bold figure on them. He was handsome, hail-fellow-well-met, and with a small private income. He was under thirty when he was elected Mayor of the borough, and exercised nominal rule over a hundred thousand persons. For the next ten years he lived and flourished under the sunshine of unvarying success. Every one acknowledged his abilities, latent and declared; it only remained for him to do credit to his admirers by some downright performance. But he seems to have preferred the glamour

of mere popularity to aught else. This spoiled him, and nowadays, though, as I have said, still but middle-aged, people look at him as if he were a comely wreck on a sandy shore. He drinks daily at the club about three times as much as he can carry with grace, and spends probably twice as much money annually as he earns. As may be imagined, he is not an ideal husband. His wife and he disagree vigorously, and his children are about as headstrong as possible.

It is not a very edifying spectacle to see two professional pugilists pounding away at each other for a championship. The belt or the purse they are struggling for, however, may, without exaggeration, be rated as an inferior lure to the regard the winner will obtain from such of the world as is interested in boxing feats. The judge hands the winner his prize with a few set words of congratulation. But those who are more nearly touched by his success crowd round him, salute him as "good old Joel" or "good old Peter!" smile on him eye to eye, and perhaps lift him shoulder high and proclaim him, for the nonce at any rate, an uncrowned king. These are the best moments of his lifetime—assuming, of course, that his conscience does not charge him with obtaining his victory by unlawful conduct.

As a rule, sad to say, it seems as if those who are so impatient to become popular lose some of their moral sense. They consecrate themselves to the one idea. Whatever stands in the way of their service must either be overridden or disregarded. These words have been imputed to Lord Nelson: "Never mind the justice or the impudence, only let me succeed." They may be true or false in their application, but they are a capital illustration of the present argument. It is a case of hit or miss, heads or tails. The recklessness may win glory or result in ruin. One must take one's chance: the game here is worth the candle. As the mother of old exhorted her son:

Success shall be in thy courser tall,
Success in thyself, which is best of all,
Success in thy hand, success in thy foot,
In struggle with man, in battle with brute.

Success and popularity may more often than not be read as synonymous terms.

It is a pity that the laurels which crown the popular man should be prone to wither so quickly. But it cannot be helped. The thing to do is to accept them with a brisk self-assurance of their fragility, and to

hang them as relics in one's treasure-house even ere the leaves have lost their suppleness. The man who is the lion of a day may, if he will, have a very fair time indeed while the day lasts. Only, he must not get fancying that it is going to be a day of eternal duration.

In literature and art popularity is nearly everything. Without it the loaves and fishes will not be of the best and freshest. There is, of course, a certain gratification—acute in proportion to the genius—in imaginative work for its own sake. But when the spell of sweet absorption is over, and it is remembered that others hold but a mean opinion, if an opinion at all, about the achievements that seem all in all to the worker, then come the pangs that wait upon neglect.

A first book is to its author pretty much, I should suppose, what her first baby is to the young mother. "How in the world will it turn out?" he asks himself, even as the proud young mamma wonders about her little unresponsive trophy. If popularity comes it is like inches to the statue. It is a test to the individual, and no mistake. His disposition will have none more potent to face in three score years and ten. Even misfortunes are easier to bear with dignity or without loss of precious traits of character. "Another publisher!" he gets into the habit of exclaiming when his bell sounds and a visitor is heard approaching.

It is delightful to be wooed by the very persons whom of old the author has, with great reluctance, trained himself to woo. The legends of Grub Street do not prepare us for any marked show of prudence or tact in the author who, of a sudden, leaps to the top of the tree of fame. Yet, nowadays, our knights and esquires of the pen enjoy their delirium sagely, and discount their celebrity with a shrewdness worthy of the Hebrews. If publishers urge them to write to order, they book the undertaking. Thus one brilliant volume may be the forerunner of a score of moderate and bad books. The age is tolerably philosophic, though it does live at a mad pace. Our men of letters, who are in a sense its embodiment, may be trusted not to lose their heads when the world startles them with the glad cry, "Well done!"

Few authors, however, can keep their popularity as our master singers keep their voices and, therefore, their popularity. Upon the whole, our leading sopranos and tenors and our brilliant actors and actresses seem to have the best of life—if popularity,

unqualified, be the test. It is, of course, a fine thing to be the Premier of a great nation, and be cheered and entreated to make little speeches even at railway stations in the middle of a journey. But a Premier has to do battle every minute of the day for his fame. He is vilified as a matter of course. He makes false steps which bring upon him indescribable obloquy and remorse, and often he is worsted in the fray, and has to hang his head and accept hootings and abuse where, not long ago, he was presented with gold boxes and as much mob-praise as he could bear without getting his ear-drum split.

Not so those who sing to and act before us. They go from triumph to triumph, and taste the sweets of their successes like no other people. When they have colds in their throats they withhold their presence—at least if they are wise. The public, having established the precedent of applauding them, never afterwards fails to applaud them. Theirs is a career of sunshine—and cheques.

This, too, must be trying to the personality, though perhaps less so than most forms of emphatic success, since the superiority of a great singer or actor, once acknowledged, is seldom subsequently called in question. Miss Bremer tells a pretty story of the Swedish nightingale which may be repeated here. "I asked Jenny of what she thought on a certain night in the midst of her greatest success, and the simple reply was: 'I remembered that I had forgotten in the morning to sew a string on my cloak.'" Not every "prima donna" is as well endowed with sweet simplicity as was Jenny Lind, yet most of them in time wear their fame as easily as an old and cherished mantle.

There is something ludicrous about the enthusiasm a leading politician excites in the mob whose mouthpiece he claims to be; and something almost pathetic, too. Time after time I have heard statesmen received by the crowd whom they have risen to address, with that monotonous hymn, "For he's a jolly good fellow!" The politician does not always, or indeed often, look like "a jolly good fellow." He is too much in earnest to be that. And, moreover, there is frequently a little twitching of the lips that tells how the canticle jars on him. He, if any one, knows how fickle is the popular voice on whose acclaiming he depends. Still, he may well be excused if for the moment he dismisses sober reason

to the background, and rejoices in the present popularity that is his.

Never indeed was political prominence more acknowledged than now. From the time a man begins to be cartooned in the papers, he may be deemed a statesman. Thenceforward he is public property, and treated as such. It depends wholly on the measure of his sensibility whether he finds his position pleasant and stimulating, or purgatorial. In the latter case we may at once assume that Nature meant him to seek popularity in another of the various domains she so kindly opens to us as incentives to eager living.

A man's standing towards his contemporaries is never really known until he is dead. It is when he is represented by a vacuum that the estimate of his popularity or the contrary may be relied upon. Obituary notices are not the most credible of newspaper paragraphs, yet they, too, have their value. It is the same with epitaphs. The phrase, "beloved and respected by all who know him," is the proudest posthumous comment a man can excite. But the frequency of its use makes one a little suspicious of it. One is often irreverent enough to fancy that could the dust beneath the tombstone thus inscribed become reanimated and call on the composers of the inscription, their love would not prove good for much. Perhaps even they would refuse the resuscitated corpse a hearing, and have him shown to the door without delay. One never knows.

Of tombstone praise, the most reasonable extant seems to be that in the epitaph of a man in Bedfordshire, which so impressed Count Beust one day: "He was as honest as is consistent with the weakness of human nature." I give it from memory, sure only that I have not marred its spirit. This is not suggestive of a high degree of popularity, but it gives us some solid ground to build upon.

BLACKPOOL.

BLACKPOOL is to the hard-working folk of the large towns of Lancashire what Brighton is to the moneyed classes of the metropolis. This gives it a character all its own. There is not a watering-place in the United Kingdom to compare with it in this respect. The people you meet on the sands of Blackpool are generally of the kind who proclaim, in their own particular dialect, that they mean to have "a high

old time;" and they generally manage to get it.

In itself, it is not a very beautiful town. It has what may, by courtesy, be termed cliffs at its north end. But really they are only banks of gravel, and the omnivorous Irish Sea is fast eating them away. For two miles a line of buildings faces the water—hotels, shops, and lodging-houses—and at exceptional holiday times this extensive promenade is thick with holiday-makers not at all remarkable for the refinement of their attire. This admirable parade apart, Blackpool is uninteresting. True, there are sand-heaps on "ocean's marge" to the south, and very attractive these are to the children, who may be seen rolling down them, and to the children's parents, who sit in demure enjoyment upon them, watching their offsprings' antics, and inhaling the pure air at the same time. There are also two piers, which, in blustering weather, offer your hat every facility for a marine excursion. And there are donkeys on the sands when the tide is out, and boats with nice white sails alluringly at hand when the tide is in. Bands, too, are to be heard; there is an aquarium, and there is a winter garden, and there soon will be an Eiffel Tower. All these last, however, as artificial aids, need not be insisted on in the catalogue of the Lancashire watering-place's charms. One and all they are well balanced, to the man who wishes his company to be select, by the exceedingly plebeian character of the visitors.

But such a man is not made to appreciate Blackpool—or, indeed, the miscellaneous nature of life itself. To the average person of an open mind this very feature is the one that most recommends the town to notice. What can be more cheerful to the humanitarian than the consciousness that these young sparks in straw hats and deerstalkers, with yellow shoes to their feet, and jewelled rings to their hands—who crowd the promenade from morn to midnight—are hard-working artisans when they are at home? It is the same with the feathered and flounced damsels, who laugh so loudly as they take the ozone to their lungs. They are factory girls for about three hundred days in the year. Modern progress and the railway companies enable them all, periodically, thus to wrap themselves round with the sweet illusions of temporal greatness. There is not a pin to choose between the self-consequence of these youthful tourists at Blackpool, and that of their betters in worldly rank at a church

parade in Rotten Row. There is a difference in tone, but this is of the subtle kind that need not be recognised.

Blackpool is the most vulgar seaside resort in the country, and therefore one of the most important, prosperous, and remarkable. Probably no municipality is more alive. Everything that can be done to please the people is done here. When the Eiffel Tower is completed the town will have a feather in its cap which is sure to benefit it for a spell. A concert hall to hold two thousand people is being built on one of its piers. It cannot yet boast of model lodging-houses like those in Drury Lane and elsewhere; but, doubtless, they too will come, so that even the crossing-sweepers of Manchester may run hither for a holiday at the least possible expenditure. In fact, it seems destined to do for the bodies of the working classes of the north what the cheap weekly scissors-and-paste journals of the land have, for the last ten years or so, done for their minds. Just as the ordinary artisan nowadays hardly thinks of travelling fifty miles by railway without buying a paper that shall assure his widow and children one hundred pounds or one thousand pounds in case of his death by accident, so in the future, it may be, no Lancashire working man will be content to live through the year without a change at Blackpool.

We would not argue that none but the poor come to this fairy godmother of watering-places. The terms of the ladies who run boarding-houses on the parade are too high for the very poor—unless, indeed, they visit here, as some seem to do, on the co-operative system. But no higher stratum than that of the middle class is tapped by the seductions of Blackpool's advertisements. Fathers with large families frequent these breezy lodging-houses, the façades of which are astonishingly provided with windows. It is deeply instructive—on the population question—to walk up or down the parade in the season and mark the extraordinary masses of heads which show at each bow window. You have, of course, the father and mother—honest, wrinkled persons, taking the ease they have so hardly earned—and behind them children and young men and women of a variety of ages between five-and-twenty and five. For such people are these lodging-houses both a blessing and a necessity. One may suppose that an exact calculation of the cost

of residence here per head on these conditions would prove that even as the air of Blackpool declares it "the sick man's physician," so its comparative cheapness announces it "the poor man's friend." For the more opulent there are hotels and hydropathic establishments enough; but though nothing can be said against them, they are distinctly of a much lower order than their fellows at the fashionable resorts of the south coast.

The town has had a singularly rapid rise, even for a watering-place that "supplies a want." People who yearn to make fortunes in landed estates need not leave England for the quest. Blackpool is one instance in many of the truth. Forty years ago green fields stretched to the sands which are now fringed with houses of a rather mellow appearance. Forty years hence, we can scarcely doubt, the town will have trebled its area, and the distance between its boundaries and those of that very different little gem of a place, St. Anne-by-the-Sea—famous for its links—will have shrunk almost to nothingness. With improved train services Blackpool's fortunes must grow. As it is, the people who live here and go daily during the week into Manchester—a ride of an hour and a half each way—are numbered by scores. There is, of course, no question as to the superiority of Blackpool's air to that of Manchester. Why, in the near future, may not the town develop into a mere "annexe" of the great city of mills and cotton? Even now it almost merits to be called Manchester-by-the-Sea, though to be sure many other large towns of Lancashire and the West Riding also shoot their thousands hither. It may become the "week-end" sanatorium of the north-west for aught we can tell.

With quiet weather this unique place may be enjoyed idyllically if you choose your spot of sand or grassy bank with methodical discretion. Even on Bank holidays it is possible to find a sandbank not wholly appropriated by sprawling humanity. But Blackpool is sometimes favoured with weather that is not at all quiet. This, too, is a feature of the town. A high spring tide, with westerly gales, swirls the waves far over the stout piles, deep-set in the massive sloped embankment which supports the promenade, and sweeps the parade of the delicate and dilettante. A storm here is something to remember. During October, 1892, for example, a barque very civilly allowed itself to be

wrecked against the roots of the chief pier, which it knocked about badly. You may still see the timbers of this luckless vessel garnishing the shore—touching the very parade indeed. They do not often get so strong a spectacle as this in Blackpool, and it was to be expected that the photographers would make the most of it. But the fact that life and the weather in most of their phases may thus be tasted here is out of question one of the merits that most commend the place to the regard of the people.

On any fine day from June to September—a Sunday preferably—it is quite a study for a person of an observing turn to stroll up and down the two miles of Blackpool's promenade. From six o'clock in the morning until ten at night people swarm here like ants about the metropolis of an anthill. The seats are occupied to the very ridges of their back supports. Locomotion is a matter of patience. If the sky is a serene blue, the sight is worth seeing. And a tolerable breeze from the sea makes things lively for the young women, who are sure to be decked in high hats, offering most seductive temptations to the wanton winds.

The other day chance took me to the town for a couple of score hours. It was a Saturday at the outset. No more unfortunate day can be suggested to a visitor for his introduction to Blackpool—especially if he has not thought it worth while to wire for a bedroom to one of the hotels. This fact is, of course, intensified on the eve of Bank holidays. I, for example, drove from one hotel to another, and so on, until it seemed probable that I might have to charter the carriage for a bedroom. There was no need for the hotel clerks and young ladies to tell me they were "full to the smoke-rooms." Every corridor teemed with gay Lancastrian bucks, with cigars between their lips, and all manner of rollicking plesantries on their tongues.

I had at length the luck to get received in a very humble house "for working men." It was a fine stroke of irony—this neglect of an establishment designed specially for them by the hard-working tourists who had rushed hither for the "week-end." The man who at home is a working man, and is not ashamed to appear as such, when he takes a holiday chooses to pose as a person to whom a crown more or a crown less is of small consequence. He does not care to brand himself openly as an artisan by seeking "working man's accommoda-

dation." Rather, he seems to flatter himself that the pale lavender checked suit, the green satin necktie with the diamond pin therein—it must be a real diamond—the twirled moustache, the deerstalker or the Tam-o'-Shanter, worn jauntily, and most of all his manners, entitle him to be received as a person of some distinction in establishments where swallow-tailed waiters and attendance charges of eighteenpence daily are the vogue.

Well, there is no earthly reason why it should not be so. This is a free land, and the tendency of the age is towards a levelling down of the mighty by inheritance to the rank of those who honestly earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. But it is not in many places as in Blackpool that this lesson is brought home with such force to one's understanding.

Towards ten o'clock on a conventional day in the season the promenade is at its most vivacious pitch. There are donkeys on the sands—if the tide permits—in troops: sleek, mouse-coloured quadrupeds, indifferent to the touch of ordinary walking canes. One after another the visitors take to the donkeys, and are mildly scourged up and down between the curling waves and the throng of holiday-makers. These last enjoy the entertainment. Mother-familias holds her sides with laughter—good to see—as she watches her worthy spouse at such pastime. And the children scamper at the ass's heels, roaring their loudest at the unusual spectacle of daddy as a cavalier.

Of course, too, there are nigger minstrels and vendors of many things. The ambulant photographer is much to the fore here. Life at Blackpool in the season is not hedged in with an innumerable number of "etiquette" restraints. Tom, Dick, and Harry soon scrape acquaintance with Jane, Susan, and Molly. It is managed with cordial laughter and acquiescence on both sides. Away they go arm in arm up the sands, a certain prey to the man with the camera. Their captor arranges them in a lovely group, and from that time forward the chance incident in their young lives gets raised to the dignity of an episode and a memory.

Best fun of all is it to see how the people go to their doom in the broad-beamed boats that are tricked up in the guise of yachts. They enter the boat by the family—father; mother; the girls, who are, or pretend to be, so anxious about their ankles in stepping over the gunwale; and the exultant, mis-

chievous boys. At length the craft is laboriously extruded into the waves. Even the wind at first seems to shirk the task of impelling such a compact load of human beings. But these soon have quite as much motion as they desire, and an hour or two hours later they are set ashore pale and tottering: the older folk irritated by the downfall of their expectations, the young ones still weeping frantically over the most disagreeable cheat.

After dark, with a full moon on the water, one may enjoy some commonplace romantic ecstasies from either of Blackpool's piers. But the authorities do not keep the piers open to the public until a late hour. They sweep the young men and young women towards the landward end with a startling want of courtesy. No doubt this is the natural outcome of circumstances; but more than aught else it seems to tell that Blackpool's clients are not of the kind who themselves waste words in supererogatory civilities.

A FESTIVAL AT BENARES.

THE blazing sun of an Indian March is pouring down with pitiless glare on minaret, dome, and shrine. Thousands of pilgrims are flocking into Benares to celebrate the commencement of the Hindu year with a great religious festival, but only a momentary glimpse of the brilliant crowds can be obtained until the heat declines. Every ray of light between the green lattices of the hastily closed gharry is a ray of blistering flame as we drive to the cantonments, where Europeans dwell under military protection in a less fervid and lightning-charged atmosphere than that of the city, disturbed as it is by frequent fanatical outbreaks from the friction of the different races comprised in a vast floating population of pilgrims.

As several hours must elapse before we can quit the darkened hotel, cool with swinging punkahs, and fragrant with piles of roses, we take a preliminary excursion into Indian history, and discover that Benares, under the name of Káshi, was recognised in the year 1200 B.C., as "an authentic fragment of the oldest Past." The venerable Hindu city is certainly one of the oldest historical sites in the world, but only shadowy glimpses reach us until B.C. 500, when Benares emerged into a distinction which placed it on the highest pinnacle of religious fame, and influenced

the entire continent of Asia. A new light dawned upon the spiritual darkness of the eastern world when the Prince Siddharta withdrew from the vice and luxury of his father's court at the foot of the Himalayas, and went forth as an ascetic to seek deliverance from evil. Years of penance failed to solve the problems of humanity, or to reveal the hidden wisdom so earnestly desired; and renouncing asceticism, Siddharta gave himself up to profound meditation under the famous peepul-tree of Gya, the result of his mental absorption being the train of thought which was afterwards elaborated into Buddhism.

Buddha was a true philanthropist; he sought the Brahmin sages, to whom he communicated the revelation bestowed upon him; returned to his father's kingdom with a message of hope and healing; and then wandered from city to city, consoling thousands of troubled souls with tidings of light and liberty. Benares became a Buddhist capital; pilgrims resorted thither from every part of Asia; and Brahminism was driven from the field, though not destroyed. Forced back upon itself and increasing in intellectual subtlety, it adapted itself with consummate skill to varying tribes and castes, gradually undermining the more mystical and subjective Buddhism, and finally expelling it from India.

In the twelfth century Benares again became a Brahminical capital, and another foe, fierce and iconoclastic, spread the terror of its name and sword as far as Buddhism had extended the olive-branch of peace. That foe was Mohammedanism.

To the love of conquest and plunder was added the passionate desire to shatter the strongest citadel of the Brahmin creed. Religious zeal wrecked the temples, and razed the city to the ground. Benares was rebuilt and regained by the Hindus, but in the seventeenth century the Mogul Emperor, Aurungzebe, determined to extirpate Brahminism by fire and sword. The city was sacked, mosques were built from the stones of the demolished temples, the Brahmins were crushed under the feet of the elephants in the triumphal processions, and the images of the gods used as steps for the faithful Moslem to tread upon.

But Benares again rose from her ashes, and a century later passed under the sway of Warren Hastings.

When the noonday heat is over, two rival guides offer their services. One, with his

dark face wreathed in smiles, salaams profoundly, and pointing to his companion, says in English:

"This fellow only eat rice. I good Christian. I eat beef—eat everything! Only one caste and one God upstairs."

This confession of faith fails to create the desired impression, and we reject the promising convert for the fanatical Hindu, who stands by in scornful silence, his black eyes blazing with wrath, and his forehead marked with the mystic "Tilak," to show that he has worshipped in the temple of his god.

A dusty road thronged with pilgrims leads into the heart of the city. Women, with orange or crimson saris wound round their slim figures, bear brass lotahs on their heads for the sacred Ganges water, and their pretty brown arms laden with clanking bangles contrast becomingly with their flowing draperies. White robes are relieved by broad stripes of pink or purple, and the sketchy costume of the men consists of a gaudy turban with a red or amber scarf folded round their bronzed limbs. White oxen with gilded horns draw heavy loads of wood for funeral pyres, and Nautch girls wearing green masks and tinselled helmets are followed by a group of women with faces painted yellow, in obedience to the law of their caste. They all wear gold or silver nose-rings; every forehead bears the red or white "Tilak," marked vertically for the Shivaites, horizontally for the devotees of Vishnu, and the tinkling of innumerable anklets makes a musical accompaniment to their stately walk. Children clad only in the brown suit with which Dame Nature provides them, dart in and out of the dazzling throng, and copper-coloured babies tumble about in the dust, at the feet of numerous beggars, who drive a remunerative trade by the roadside. The beating of tom-toms before the dancing girls, the thrumming of sitars, and the monotonous chanting of Vedic hymns by hundreds of guttural voices, increase the weird effect of the extraordinary procession. At length the straggling houses become more frequent, and we pass mansions with wreaths of green leaves above every lintel, to show that no Christian foot may cross the threshold. The dwellings of rich and poor mingle in heterogeneous confusion; tumble-down huts prop themselves against lofty palaces, and many of the narrow streets are only available for pedestrians. Tier after tier the shrines and temples rise

above the broad blue Ganges, and the marble shafts of two magnificent minarets form the climax of the impressive picture. Some of the buildings along the shore have assumed additional picturesqueness from the subsidence of their foundations, causing the pinnacled masses of stone to slip into the water, where they have obtained secure positions at apparently dangerous angles.

The famous brass bazaar is our first destination, and the dark corridors offer a welcome retreat from the blazing sun; while the dim alleys gleam with the lustre of the polished metal, fashioned into trays, bowls, and lamps, bells, images and avatárs, cups and flagons. The primitive tools used for the most elaborate designs consist of hammers and punches. A man in rose-coloured turban and orange scarf pricks out the minute and intricate pattern of an exquisite tray with an iron knob and a rusty nail; the artistic moulding of every ornament displaying the inherited instincts and cultured tastes of an ancient civilisation. The brilliant avenues of the silk bazaar, lined with the fairy fabrics of Oriental looms, offer a bewildering variety of attractions. Brocades, mingled with gold or silver thread, form the celebrated "Kincob," a glittering material of great value fit for royal robes; and gauzy textures, apparently woven of moonshine and mist, festoon the long arcades with shimmering folds of rainbow hue. These miracles of Indian handiwork are executed by the Moslem inhabitants of Benares, who occupy the district of Madanpura, and trace their descent from the skilled artificers formerly employed by the Mogul Court. In one of the shadowy lanes gold-beaters draw out gold and silver wires into threads finer than the thinnest silk, the dark faces of the white-turbaned workmen as they bend over the red flames of the crucible suggesting the practice of some mystic rite. Diving beneath a low-browed arch we reach the toy bazaar, where shining lacquer work is stacked up in endless variety of form and colour. The lac, prepared from the gum of the peepul-tree, and held against the toy as it turns on the lathe, when melted by friction to the desired consistency gradually hardens upon the revolving article, the finishing touch being given by the pressure of a palm-leaf upon the surface to render it smooth and glossy.

Emerging into a narrow street, we encounter a tribe of pilgrims from the

Chinese frontier, with flat Mongolian features, long pigtailed and flowing garments of striped Thibetan cloth. The leaders of the band twirl their praying machines, silver cubes filled with parchment prayers supposed to be offered every time the little cylinder revolves. Boys in blue skirts and wearing long silver earrings bring up the rear, their almond-shaped eyes roving round the unfamiliar scene with mingled awe and amusement.

Benares contains more than five thousand Brahmin sanctuaries and three hundred mosques, besides the myriads of smaller shrines in every crevice and corner where a devout worshipper can find room for the image of a Hindu god. The principal temples are surmounted by the flashing trident of Shiva the Destroyer, the tutelary divinity of the sacred city, though every Hindu deity is worshipped by turns in Benares. A reverential crowd surrounds a party of emaciated fakirs, smeared with ashes, painted yellow, and spotted from head to foot with red lozenge-shaped prayer-marks, their credit account with heaven being too long to be chalked on the forehead, and requiring a larger surface for registration. Their matted hair descends to the waist, and every face wears a pitiable expression of pain and patience. One bony wreck performs extraordinary gymnastic antics, and another stands with skeleton arms extended, rigid from long disuse.

Now the crowd thickens round the Durga Kund, or Monkey Temple, dedicated to the goddess Durga, authoress of pain, sorrow, and death. She is worshipped by the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes in order to appease her wrath and avert her vengeance. In the centre of the temple court numerous monkeys gambol and chatter as they climb about an ancient tamarind-tree, and the sedate-looking head of this lively family sits on a bough and pelts us with leaves, as though resenting our intrusion within the sacred precincts. The worshippers give alms in food to these sacred monkeys, which are dedicated to Durga, and placed under her protection. An upright post in the quadrangle serves as a sacrificial altar, the animal's neck being inserted within a central slit like a double-pronged fork. The executioner with his axe faces the temple, and an acolyte pulls the hind legs of the victim until the neck is sufficiently stretched for one blow to sever the head from the body. Failure in this particular betokens evil to the offerer of the sacrifice.

A priest is beating a drum before the temple to summon the worshippers. Stalls of votive wreaths surround the walls, and thick garlands of orange marigolds or white temple flowers are hung round the necks of the faithful, and carried in their hands as peace-offerings to the savage goddess. The stone horses of Durga, supposed to bear her forth by night on her errands of wrath, flank the portico with barbaric forms and lion-like faces. Two bronze bells hang from the domed roof, and as the noisy, irreverent crowd presses up, laughing and talking, to the very steps of the shrine, a solemn Brahmin drowns the uproar of voices by the deafening din of a bronze hammer, while his attendant holds out a brazen dish for offerings of money. The image of Durga possesses a golden face, ten arms, a necklace of pearls, and a crown of brazen serpents. Votive wreaths suspended from her neck and piled up at her feet conceal her glittering robes, but the mirth and gossip of the crowd seem unrestrained by the presence of the terrible goddess, a formal act of worship sufficing to satisfy her requirements.

From this unedifying spectacle we pass to the Well of Knowledge, beyond a stone bull which receives homage from a knot of pilgrims clad in scarlet. A red canopy covers the sacred spring of Gyan Kâfe, and a cloth spread over the opening prevents votive offerings from falling into the well, but in spite of this precaution the quantities of rice and flowers which sully the water make it offensive with the constant decay of vegetable matter. A Brahmin serves out the precious liquid to the pilgrims, who drink it thirstily from the brazen cups as though enjoying the overpowering odour of sanctity. Every drop is paid for, and the owners of the well are men of vast wealth, though as clamorous for bakshish as the beggars who crowd round the steps. Ganges water forms part of every votive offering. The worshippers dash it into the well, offer libations to the images in the surrounding niches, and drench the stone pavement until the whole place is a black swamp of mud. The sacred spring marks the centre of the holy city, and a mosque erected as an insult to the Hindu community towers conspicuously above the clustering temples, and occupies the former site of a sanctuary dedicated to Krishna. His image, overthrown by Moslem zeal at the sacking of the temple, according to

Brahmin tradition, prudently cast itself into the well.

Beyond a spiral shrine sculptured into filmy marble lace, the three towers of the Golden Temple reflect the glory of the orient sun on thin plates of beaten gold. A booth on the threshold glows with garlands of red and purple blossoms; alternating with the favourite marigolds; the temple is crowded with fantastic images, sprinkled by the worshippers with Ganges water from their brazen lotahs, before they descend into a walled enclosure to rub their faces with the tails of the sacred bulls, and kiss the mouths of the pampered animals which mingle with the crowd and eat the countless wreaths that are strewn upon the ground. A twisting street lined with temples leads to shops filled with images and all the elaborate paraphernalia of Hindu worship. The silver shrine of Sanichar—the planet Saturn—lights up a dark angle between the two crumbling towers of the Cow Temple, the dirtiest spot in Benares, sacred to the Goddess Annapurna, the female providence of the city. The sanctuary contains three famous shrines, dedicated respectively to Ganesh, the elephant-headed God of Wisdom, Parbatî, his mother, and Hanuman, the monkey god, represented as a crowned ape. Beggars rend the air with cries for help, though gifts of rice and money from the worshippers enable these professional mendicants to pass an easy existence. The temple court, with grey Brahmini cows standing knee-deep in wreaths of marigolds, on which they graze, is the favourite place of worship, a prayer and prostration sufficing for the shrines, and all further devotions being paid to the sleek herd of Annapurna's earthly representatives, which are embraced with ecstatic devotion. Image-makers pursue their calling in a mouldering arcade, adorned by a figure of Ganesh, smeared with red lead, and furnished with feet, ears and trunk of solid silver. An open space further on bristles with spiral shrines, and on their marble steps, Brahmin pundits read aloud the sacred "Shastras" to the passing multitudes.

Western associations are so incongruous with the character of this typical Oriental city, that a group of buildings comprising college, town hall and hospital of modern date and English origin, appears as startling anomalies amid the countless memorials of alien races and conflicting creeds. The disused mint, which flanks the tokens of European occupation, offered

an asylum to our countrymen in the dark days of the Indian Mutiny, and from the adjacent palace an English judge of Benares, during the Insurrection of 1799, kept the frenzied Hindus at bay with a spear.

The original form of Hindu theology seems practically buried beneath a dead weight of legendary accretion, and the superstructure, raised to abnormal height by centuries of growth, renders it difficult to estimate the value of the foundation.

From Brahma, the Creator, every kind of existence originated, but the worship of Vishnu, who floats wrapped in dreamy abstraction on the lotus-covered waters which drowned a former world, was found too mystical for the multitude, and ten avatârs, or incarnations, were devised in order to popularise it. The first five are wholly mythical, but with the sixth we touch historic ground in Rama, the priestly hero of the Sacerdotal caste. The seventh avatâr was the warrior Rama Chundra, whose deeds are sung in the Indian epic of the Ramayan, and whose name is on every lip. The morning salutation is "Ram, Ram," the funeral cry of every caste is "Ram sat hai"—the self-existent one. The pilgrims pursue their way exclaiming, "Sita Ram! Sita Ram!" and his victory, aided by the monkeys and their god Hanuman, over the demon god Ravana, is commemorated by an annual festival. The eighth avatâr is Krishna, a popular defender of his country, worshipped with intense enthusiasm under the form of a flute-playing shepherd standing on a serpent's head. The ninth avatâr is Buddha. This was a masterly stroke of Brahmin sagacity, as by acknowledging him to be a divine incarnation, his adherents were gained, and the necessity for a separate creed abolished. The tenth avatâr is yet to come, unless, as some assert, it may already be found in the English monarchy! Shiva, the third divinity of the Hindu triad, is described in the Shastras as, "He who destroys life to renew it," but popular devotion apparently stops short of the saving clause, and recognises him as the Destroyer only. Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer, centralise the idea of a triune godhead.

When the purple beauty of a starlit Indian night succeeds to a fiery sunset, we wend our way to the sacred river.

Lanterns carried by pilgrims, and flaring torches on arch and shrine, chequer the city into mysterious breadths of light and

shadow. Weird figures of Ganesh, the guardian of each native house, stand out in startling relief from the blackness of the towering walls, and the river reflects the illumination from strings of coloured lamps, which blaze above the steep bank in twinkling festoons of light. Boats with red lanterns at the mast and flaming torches at the prow, enhance the brilliancy of the scene, and carriages roll along filled with native magnates in embroidered robes and jewelled turbans, or money-lenders in flowing muslins and tall black hats. Veiled ladies peep from curtained litters borne by attendant slaves to richly-decorated private boats, and thousands of pilgrims flock to the edge of the healing waters. Those in front stoop down to kiss the sandy shore, and lave their hands in the sacred current; others prostrate themselves with tears of joy and cries of penitence on attaining the goal of so many hopes and prayers. A gaily-clad group of Scindians and a sturdy tribe of Nepalese, with the native "Kutcheri" in every belt, have travelled a thousand miles on foot through mountain snow, pathless jungle, and burning plain to reach this supreme desire of every faithful heart. Old and young, rich and poor, hale and sick, are all represented here. Some in every pilgrim band, worn out with toil and travel, only reach the Ganges to die, but to them death by the holy river is only the gate of Heaven. The wild and melancholy scene is intensely pathetic, and it is impossible to gaze unmoved on the vast multitudes of struggling souls longing for light and purification.

Taking a boat, we push out to some gilded barges, where Nautch girls are dancing in tinselled robes, with hands and feet adorned by heavy turquoise rings. As the dreamy Nautch proceeds, the dancers don a number of glittering veils and mantles, in addition to the spangled garments, which look suffocating on this hot Indian night. Tom-toms beat, and unknown instruments discourse barbaric music; a guttural voice chimes in with the nasal twang of the East, and an actor attracts a swarm of boats round the red barge on which his stage is erected. The play in dumb show consists of grimaces and grotesque attitudes, and to uninitiated minds appears a very rudimentary performance, but the muslin-robed Hindus smoking narghilés on their gaily-painted boats are convulsed with amusement. Jugglers, snake-charmers, and fortune-tellers attract crowds of spectators, and

the number of illuminated boats is so great that one could easily cross the mighty Ganges by stepping from one deck to another. Only the intention of returning at sunrise induces us to quit the fantastic spectacle. It is midnight when we leave, and at five a.m. we launch again on the blue waters, crimsoned by the flush of dawn. The curving domes and spiral shrines of stone and marble reflect the deepening glow of the sky as we row past the palaces of Hindu rajahs, who come to die at Benares as a passport to Heaven. The ceremonial bathing in the Ganges forms the great morning act of worship, and the bathing ghâts belong to different races, so that each pilgrim band possesses an accredited status in the holy city. Long flights of crumbling steps descend from the towering shrines to the water's edge. The river is already full of bathers, throwing the sacred water over each other from brazen lotahs, with the symbolical rites of their intricate creed. Some stand absorbed in prayer, with thin brown arms raised towards heaven, and careworn faces bathed in tears. Groups of high-caste girls in filmy white vells step daintily into the river, their slaves waiting on the bank. Grey-bearded men and bright-faced boys descend the steps of a neighbouring ghât chanting a wild mantra; and crowds of sick or infirm worshippers are carried or assisted down the steep stairways, and supported by friendly hands as they dip themselves in the healing flood. A ghât where Brahma is supposed to have sacrificed ten horses sanctifies the most unclean, and at an eclipse—always a sacred phenomenon in India—the vanguard of pilgrims generally get pushed into the water volens volens by the dense throng behind them. The stately observatory above this ghât was built by a Rajah of Benares who reformed the calendar, and the instruments of brass and iron with which he worked out astrological problems are still contained within the walls.

As the morning sun sparkles on the brazen tridents above pinnacle and shrine, the crowds increase. One ghât is thronged by pilgrims in green and gold, another is densely packed with white figures, and a parti-coloured mass beyond displays the shifting brilliancy of scarlet, orange, and purple. We land at the Chankia ghât, the seat of serpent-worship lined with brazen images. Sixty shrines surround a tank above the steps, and carved snakes cover a stone pavement beneath the green boughs

of a tremulous peepul-tree. Although snake-worship is dying out, one day in the year perpetuates the ancient devotion; when offerings of buffalo milk, marigold wreaths, and Ganges water are presented at the Serpent's Well, beneath a stone canopy encircled with a sculptured cobra.

Hundreds of tiny flags, red, green, and yellow, disfigure a lovely Nepalese temple of fretted marble. The supplication inscribed on every fluttering pennon is supposed to be repeated whenever it waves in the breeze. The idea of offering prayer on the wings of the wind belongs primarily to the mountain tribes of the Himalayan frontier, who experience the full might and majesty of the wild gales which sweep round the snowy heights, and with unconscious poetry press the motive power of Nature into the service of faith, imagining the tempestuous air as the resistless force which bears their petitions to Heaven. At length we reach the Manakarnika ghât, the sanctum sanctorum of Benares, and the chief place of pilgrimage. Below it lies the Cremation ghât, black with the increasing mass of charred human dust round the ever-burning funeral pyres which are kept alight by ghoul-like figures of the lowest Hindu caste. Some of the smouldering logs are surrounded by mourners rocking to and fro as they watch the lurid flames, and many of the dead are undergoing their preliminary steeping in the Ganges. The fire from which the pyres are lit is the monopoly of a man who, though of lowest caste, is one of the wealthiest citizens. Upright stone monuments of former "Satis" sacrificed here rise from the blackened ashes, and, as we watch the grim scene, a few bones are raked from the burning embers into a basket and thrown into the Ganges, when another body is placed beneath the wood, and the feet covered by the scarlet cloth which bound them when plunged into the river.

The slender minarets of Aurangzebe's mosque soar above the temples and vanish in aerial pinnacles which seem to prick the hot blue sky. Though the plain whitewashed interior offers no point of interest, the view from these lofty minarets repays the toilsome ascent. The irregular streets and crowded ghâts of the city at our feet look like moving ribbons of gorgeous colours. Straw penthouses and red or orange umbrellas lean over flower-stalls, and shelter intending bathers from the sun. Blossoms and lamps float on the water, offerings to Gunga, or tributes of affection to the

bleased dead whose ashes rest in the cleansing tide. On the alluvial plain of the Ganges, dark forms move about a pink field of Persian roses, gathering the petals from whence the famous attar is distilled. Green rice-fields and yellow-flowered dāt alternate with plantations of indigo, "bluest of things green, greenest of things blue," protected by hedges of castor oil plants, a line of white poppies on the horizon marks the beginning of the opium district. Beyond a cluster of thatched huts under plummy palm-trees, the ruinous mounds of Sarnath, and the round tower wherein Buddha turned the Wheel of the Law, break the monotony of the level landscape with mementoes of the time when the presence of the great native reformer consecrated the city which now rejects his teaching. The sacred peepul-tree before the gate of the mosque is encircled by a devout multitude, muttering their mantras with painful monotony as they walk round the gnarled trunk in the flickering light and shadow of the feathery leaves.

We descend to the Temple of Baironath, the invisible city magistrate who rides upon an equally invisible dog. Packs of dogs are fed daily at the temple gates, and a polite Brahmin waves a fan of peacock's feathers over our heads as a safeguard from the assaults of demons, before conducting us to the tank behind the shrine. This marble bath is regarded as the goal of the sacred pilgrimage, and every Hindu who completes the circuit of the holy city crowns the feat by a final plunge into the muddy waters dedicated to the ghostly guardian of mysterious Benares.

Our own pilgrimage is over, and we take a farewell glance at the religious capital of India from the grand railway bridge which spans the Ganges, and links Benares with modern thought and western progress. Our desultory ramble may not prove wholly unprofitable if we learn thereby a deeper sympathy with those spiritual aspirations of our common humanity, which, like seeds buried beneath a weight of earth, shoot upward through the surrounding darkness towards the unknown light of Heaven.

MURTY MULLIGAN'S REVENGE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

WHEN the tide is in, the great Atlantic is not a stone's throw from the village street. If you stood at the door of Patrick

Casey's "general" shop, you could see the boats, fastened to the black stakes that leaned in the sloping shingle, rising and falling to the music of the tiny waves that drummed against their bows. At low tide they lie still, lolling on the golden sand with its patches of red-brown gravel showing here and there; and the long damp seaweeds, that seem to stretch their brown and amber arms in longing to the receding ocean, make all the air pungent and refreshing. It is a little place—Gurtheen—standing, as it were, with its feet in the water; a little place that holds many a friend of mine—men, ay, and women too, of no high rank, but with simple, kindly, human hearts. I was the son of the doctor who served the tumbledown dispensary, with its green bull's-eye window-panes and little red blinds. It was whitewashed within and without, and its low window-sill made a comfortable basking place for the loiterers, for it occupied a prominent place in the village, between Casey's "general stores" and Hennessey's public-house. I can remember nothing of my mother but the soft, cool touch of her hand on my head once, when I was a child and very ill. Sometimes I fancy that I remember her voice, but I think it is only a voice heard in some dream that I cannot remember. Yet, perhaps, it is hers all the same. They say my father never was quite the same after my mother died. He devoted his whole life to the healing of his sick, and helping every one he could, except me, his son, whom he left to his old housekeeper and the village schoolmaster. And so I grew up, "the pore docther's gossoon," pitied and made much of by the warm-hearted peasants. I shared their sorrows with them, and they strove to share their joys with me, with a respect and tacit delicacy that kept the social inequality well defined; for my father was of good family, and I always had my rights as "wan av the ould shcock."

Now, as I sit by my cosy fire of an evening with the curtains drawn to keep out the London fog, nothing rests me so much after the long day of office work as the memories of that little corner in Ireland where my childhood and boyhood were spent. Gazing into the glowing coals, I let my pipe go out, and once more stand, in fancy, on the top of Mount Corrin, which rises behind the village. Looking northward, away from the sea, there is the bog—the bog of Tinnimuck—stretching away, away in the sunset, till the land grows

green again, and the furze-clad hedges and grey stone walls that sharply define the green fallow and brown ploughland make the distant slopes look like some huge chessboard. Behind all, the hills of Kerry—Mangerton and The Paps—are a darker blue against the glorious blue of heaven. And there, too—there, still more faint and blurred—is the jagged summit of the Devil's Punch Bowl. How beautiful it all is! How the amber beams of the dying sunlight blend with the rich tones of the vast stretch of brown! Here and there the ricks of turf stand black by the black pools, and with the great patches of rich dark brown show in bold relief against the tan, where the ground is drier; and, lest the picture may be too sombre, the burnished gorse and purple heather have come to dwell on the little hillocks that raise their heads, high and dry, above the damp peat. As the pale rays slant athwart the brown, a purple haze hangs over all, but it does not conceal the tiny dots of scarlet that move below, where some thrifty peasant has pinned up her skirt before she fills a creel with the rough sods.

Then I turn to look seaward, out over the chimneys almost hidden by their soft blue smoke, where the houses huddle together down below. The vast plain of water, violet-hued in the darkling light of evening, is deserted, save for a brown sail or two where a fisher from Berehaven or Bantry creeps along home. How cosily the village nestles at the margin of its haven! Mount Corrin, on which I stand, towers at its back; while to the right and left the hills of Corrigreen and Corrigmore rear their great brown bracken-covered bulwarks, that shelter both the village and its little harbour. There lie the fishing fleet, almost at their owners' doors; not much of a fleet indeed—half-a-dozen clumsy black boats, two punts, and Doolan's cutter.

The last, a sombre marine antiquity, was the chief source of income to her owner. She made sluggish expeditions to Berehaven or Bantry, coming back with a cargo of slate, flour, or artificial manure, to be retailed by Patrick Cassy. When fully manned her crew consisted of Mike Doolan, master and owner; Mrs. Doolan, his wife; Mickey Doolan, his son, aged fourteen; and "Boxer," Mickey's dog, an unscrupulous yellow terrier with ears that didn't match, and only half an inch of tail. That dog always sneaked about as if he were "wanted," and kept his wretched little appendage tucked tightly down, as if

he feared that such a strongly-marked feature would identify him and lead to his arrest. Mike Doolan was a little man with one eye—he lost his eye when he got the cutter—but there is a story about it.

I remember him a wiry young fellow with black hair and two piercing black eyes. He lived in a little shanty—where, indeed, he still lives—half-way up the hill of Corrigreen on the west side of the haven, and there he managed to support himself and his old mother by working as a day labourer here and there, and keeping a few sheep on his bit of land. Then Mike fell in love, and loved Norah Daly with all the intensity and jealousy of his Celtic temperament. But big Murty Mulligan loved her too, with equal intensity and more jealousy. They had been sworn friends, these two who now were rivals. Together they had plodded barefoot to the low, whitewashed National school at the east end of the village, and together they had protected and made much of little Norrie Daly, their schoolfellow, who trotted between them in the whitest of pinafores and a little scarlet cloak. But it was the raw love of boyhood then; now it was the mature love of manhood, with its wild longing for sole possession.

Norah lived in a tiny cottage on the hillside about two miles from Gurtheen, where she kept house for Owen Daly, her grandfather, an old man bedridden by age and rheumatism. They were very poor, for there was no one to dig the bit of land, and labour was dear. But the work was well done, nevertheless. Old Daly's potatoes were never a day later than those of his neighbours, and his oats were always threshed and stored before the weather broke.

"Sure ould Daly have ne'er a wan at all to do a han's turn fur him," Mike would say when I accosted him in the dim evening light, stealthily hastening up Corrigreen, with a shovel or a scythe on his arm.

Another evening it would be Big Murty Mulligan, who strode up the hill with his flail or his spade flung across his shoulder.

"'Tis late you are going to work, Murty!"

"Why then it is that, yer honour," Murty would answer with a sheepish smile. "But there's an owld man above here—mobbe ye've heard av him—wan Daly; an' 'tis in the bed he is all his time, wid pains in the bones av him; an', sure, 'tis as good for me to give him a han' now an' thin."

On these occasions Big Murty always spoke as if old Daly were a mere casual acquaintance, whom, probably, I did not share with him; and I liked him for this little conceit. Well he knew that Owen Daly and I were old friends, but in his eagerness that his services to the old man should pass unnoticed lest they should in any way be connected with Norah, he persistently ignored my acquaintanceship with the little household on the hill, and never mentioned the girl he was serving for. So, for many a day, the old man lived in comparative luxury. All the reward his willing workmen sought was half an hour's chat by the turf fire, while Norah sewed next the candle at the window. They never met, these two men—at least, not at first.

Once, when driving out of the village in the dusk—for my father would take me to distant sick calls to hold the mare—we met Mike slouching down the hill carrying his spade, and with only a very surly "good night" to fling to us.

Later, as we passed Daly's, there was Big Murty in his shirt-sleeves, digging briskly in the growing light of the moon, and lilting a verse from "Lannigan's Ball." I knew then that he had forestalled his rival; and felt sorry for Mike, who was my favourite. But on another evening it was Big Murty who flung past, trying to conceal a pair of shears beneath his flannel wrapper, and afterwards I had a glimpse of Mike on his knees by Daly's turf rick, busily stripping the wool from a struggling sheep by the light of a bleary-eyed lantern. He had won the race that time.

It was on a misty October evening that I saw them next, as I took a short cut over Corrigmore Hill, and came out by Daly's borreen. There they were—both of them—storing turnips in a pit at the end of the yard. I stayed awhile to chat with them and watch them. They didn't speak to each other except to suggest or recommend something connected with their work; and then their eyes never met as they took counsel concerning the business in hand with an appalling solemnity. Once Norah came to the cottage door. Instantly they both raised their eyes to look, but turned them on each other at once—each to see if the other saw—then, ashamed of being mutually convicted of spying, their heads fell over their work again, and were not raised until the girl had disappeared indoors. Though I was only a boy in my "teens," I was so struck by

this little scene that I have never forgotten it; and, at the time, I realised as far as a boy can realise such things, how deeply these men felt. After that I often managed to pass old Daly's of an evening, and now I can piece together the glimpses I had of the tragedy that was working itself out with Mike Doolan's story, and was told me long years after.

Days, weeks, and months sped by, but if ever there were need of the work of men's hands at the little homestead on Corrigmore, there were the two figures—one big and burly, the other small and alight—plying spade, scythe, or flail in the dusk. There was a tacit agreement finally, so I learned, that when there was work to be done "above," one or both would be there as soon as their own work set them free.

"Above" was the little cottage on the hill, and by that term it always went on the rare occasions on which either had to mention it to the other; to everybody else it was the usual "owld Owen Daly's." They spoke not a word of love to Norah, who would sit demurely sewing or knitting when old Owen had one of them in—they never were in the cottage together—to rain thanks and blessings on the head that cared less for all the benisons of the saints of Heaven than for one glance of one woman of earth; and that a slight, barefooted girl, who was herself all she could bestow on any man.

"Lord love ye," the old man would say, "'tis ye're good to the pore! Heaven'll give ye year reward, for 'tis for the love av Heaven ye dig the bit av land widout. Devil a wan o' me that can give ye annything, an' 'tis ye that knows that same!"

Then the hypocrite at the hearth would bend his guilty head lower, and steal a sidelong glance at the long black lashes, which on these occasions were never raised to unveil the deep grey eyes.

And so they waited. Owen Daly was old and feeble, but, as long as he lived, so long would his grandchild dwell with him, his only comfort and the dearest thing in the world to him. It was no use for the boys to walk to and from mass with pretty Norah, or look in on a Sunday, uncomfortably splendid in their best coats and ravishing ties. In vain was their respectful deference to "Misther Daly, sor"; of no avail their anxious enquiries, "An' how are ye gettin' the health agin, this fine weather?" The simple-hearted old man gratefully made suitable reply, and gra-

ciously recounted the symptoms of the past week, calling on his granddaughter to bear witness to the truthful record of the same and to the gratifying sympathy with which it was received. Sometimes a neighbouring farmer would come in deadly earnest to seek encouragement in his wooing from the maiden on the hill, and, at such a crisis, a strange instinct never failed to bring Mike and Big Murty on the spot. Then they combined their forces, and joined to rout the invader. Should he linger for a whole day, he would never get a chance of seeing the object of his visit alone, and rarely managed even to include her in the conversation, for one or other of his rivals never left his side, while both displayed a marvellous resource of conversational power in his honour. Thus, wooed covertly on all sides but openly on none, pretty Norah Daly went about her duties demurely from day to day. Big Murty Mulligan would have readily sought his fate at her hands, had he any hope of her deserting her grandfather, or of the latter leaving his old home to dwell with a son-in-law; for hadn't Murty a cottage with a stairs in it—a real stairs, not a ladder—and two acres and a quarter of land, besides the cutter that lay below in the haven beneath Mike Doolan's cottage? Murty was well off, with no one but his old mother to provide for, and a little money in the bank at Bantry. He was a fine fellow, too, and many a girl would be proud to have such a man to take her to mass and fair, though his hair was more red than brown, and his eyes might have been a darker grey. But while Murty had himself, and the land, and the cutter, and the cottage with the stairs to offer; Mike Doolan had only himself, a shanty with no stairs—for there was nowhere to go up to except the thatch—and one big, bare, stony field. Mike would brood over this difference in their fortunes when he came out of his door in the morning, and the first thing he saw was Big Mulligan's cutter, with her great brown sail with the patch of dirty white in the middle, flapping lazily in the breeze at his very feet. Many an oath did Mike, in the bitterness of his heart, launch down the rocky side of Corrigeen Hill, at the cutter that rested on the water like a great moth drying the dews of night from its brown wings. Why did he persist in thinking of Norah Daly? Sure, when the old man died, Big Murty would have no bother at all, only to take her by the hand and carry her off to the priest. And what could he

say? Nothing at all, except that he'd give the blood of his heart for her—always; yes, even though she married Murty! But that would be no use since he hadn't the money.

Nevertheless, with all his philosophy, Mike went on loving and slaving for the girl. So did Murty. It was the old story, only there were two Jacobs serving for the one Rachel, and the end was to be sooner. For one morning—when the usual little knot of loiterers basked in the sun at the dispensary window—some one lounged up with the news that Owen Daly was dead. Big Murty and Mike were there at the time, but when the rest murmured their regret and recalled the virtues of the dead man, they said not a word; only their eyes met for one instant, and each read in the burning look of the other a declaration of war; then, with some muttered excuse, they left the talkers and went their different ways. They met again that night at the cottage on the hill, where Owen Daly was being waked by his friends and neighbours. For many a day they had not been under the roof together, and now they sat: one on each side of the still, sheeted figure: staring into the glowing turf fire, and never raising their eyes except to throw a glance, full of pity, at the slender figure bowed in an agony of grief where the head of the dead man lay. As the night grew the little cottage filled with a sympathising crowd of men and women, and whisperers grew bolder until the room was a buzz of conversation; but still the two men sat motionless, each striving to look into the future and binding himself by all the oaths he knew to accomplish his end by means fair or foul.

All through that night and the next they sat, torn by passions and racked by conflicting hopes; while between them the dead body, in which like passions and like hopes had once dwelt, now lay resting—cold and still—a grim contrast to the living. On the third day was the funeral, and after that things went on as usual, only it was known in the village that, within a week, pretty Norah Daly was leaving the place, to live in Macroom with an aunt who had come to bury "owld Owen," and still stayed with her niece. Then the two men knew that they must know their fate immediately, or lose all hope for ever.

It was the fourth night after the funeral when Mike buttoned his coat to withstand

the driving rain, and, with his teeth set, stepped out of his cottage into the darkness. His mother covertly watched him go without showing the slightest interest in his movements until the door closed behind him, and then, in a moment, she was on her knees before the little crucifix that hung over the settle, wildly entreating the Blessed Mother for her son's safety and welfare.

Meanwhile, Mike strode down the hill, through the village, and up the hill of Corrigmore, taking a longer path along the edge of the cliff that went sheer down to the beach below, for he wished that no one might know of his visit. The rain had stopped now, and the moonlight came fitfully through the clouds that the bellowing south-west trundled down the sky. Half-way round the hill Mike turned to climb the slope, that, descending on the other side, he might approach the cottage from the back. As he faced the hill, a figure appeared on the summit, hurrying down the very path he was to take, and by the light of the moon, which at last had found an opportunity of giving the earth all her rays, Mike recognised the broad shoulders and swinging gait of Big Murty Mulligan.

He paused where he was, on the edge of the cliff where, thirty feet below, the dripping rocks and almy gravel shone like silver in the silver light; and, further out, the great Atlantic leaped madly up the beach to drag the screaming shingle down. Not until he was within a few paces of the stationary figure did Big Murty seem to see it. Then he stopped short, and flinging his hat to the back of his head, wiped the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand, and Mike saw that he was pale as death, while his eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

"'Tis late ye're walking out," said Murty, staring full into the other's face.

"No lather than yersilf," answered Mike, returning the stare defiantly.

"An' mebbe, now," said Murty sarcastically, "I might make so bould as to giss where ye're goin'?"

"That's no business at all av ye're, Murty Mulligan," said Mike shortly—moving as if to continue his way. But Big Murty stepped in his path, his eyes flashing from beneath his scowling brows, and his clenched teeth showing white between his lips. For a minute they faced each other in the moonlight, while their deep breathing came faster and

louder, and the storm of passion that was rising in their breasts grew stronger and fiercer till it held complete mastery over both. "Why should I let ye come or go?" hissed Murty at length, as if talking to himself.

"I tell ye let me pass," said Mike fiercely, stepping forward and roughly shoving his opponent. But Big Mulligan hardly stirred; he only leaned forward to peer more closely into the other's face, with eyes that yet seemed to glare at nothing—and grasping Mike's uplifted arm like a vice, again he hissed softly to himself: "Why should I let ye come or go?"

For a moment they stood thus, fierce hatred burning in their eyes, till the sea seemed calling to them to strike, the wind screaming to them to kill, and all the night cried murder!

Then they closed and sought each other's throats. To and fro in the moonlight they wayed and stumbled, breathing in long labouring sobs, striving and straining each to get the other down in the grass, where he might kneel on his chest and strangle his life away with both hands. Now the bigger man prevailed, now the smaller, and the end was far from near when Murty managed to snatch his sailor's knife from its leather sheath, and struck his opponent prone on the grass, with the blood that looked black in the moonlight gushing from his temple. The sight of the dark stream on the white face half buried in the grass, and the warm sticky dampness on his fingers, made Big Murty almost mad. He kicked the prostrate form savagely twice, and then with a wild exulting cry, flung away the weapon, and stooping down seized the foot of the unconscious man to drag him to the edge of the cliff, which was but a few yards off. He dragged him to the very edge, and stooping lower, exerted all his strength to cast the body down on the rocks beneath. But Mike's coat had caught in something—a stump of furze, perhaps—and with an oath, Mulligan lent all his strength to another attempt. The next moment there was a hoarse cry, and Big Murty Mulligan fell backwards over the cliff, Mike Doolan's boot firmly grasped in both his hands. A sickening thud on the rocks below, and a groan that was lost in the roar of wind and sea, and the fray was over.

In the early morning some fishers, taking a short cut to the shore, found Mike

Doolan lying with his head in a great crimson stain on the grass. They raised him pitifully, and were bearing him away when some one, catching sight of the signs of the struggle that showed in the trampled turf, peeped curiously over the cliff, and drew back immediately with an oath half smothered with horror. After a shrinking glance at the awful object below, four of the party hastened down to the beach by a steep zigzag path further on. With bated breath and dry lips they raised Big Murty, telling each other in whispers that there had been "bad work betune thim two, an' 'twas the way Mike Doolan, Heaven forgive him, threw Big Murty over—rist his sowl this night!" For they thought Murty was dead, while Mike still breathed.

Mulligan's cottage was nearest, and thither they bore the two men. A crowd seemed to spring up immediately round the low doorway, and half-a-dozen eager messengers sought the priest and doctor—the latter of whom, my father, reached the spot first, just in time to help to hold Murty's mother, who struggled to wreak her vengeance on the prostrate form of Mike Doolan. When the room was cleared of all save the priest and the old woman—who now knelt weeping by her son's head, feebly wiping the blood from his lips with the hem of her apron, and lovingly murmuring to him as if she saw before her, not the stalwart form of a man, but the baby she had nursed thirty years before—my father made his examination. Soon the verdict was known. Big Murty was suffering from internal injuries that would probably prove fatal, though he might recover consciousness before the end; while Mike was safe, except that he would never use one of his eyes again.

Presently the door was opened to a peremptory knock, and Mike's mother was kneeling by him, while an astute-looking police sergeant whispered with Father Murphy. Fortunately the two women did not meet, for Big Murty lay on his bed in the inner room, while Mike was propped up on the settle in the kitchen. The day wore on, and still the watchers watched. The good priest waited that he might be at hand to shrive the dying man when consciousness returned, and the officer in the hope of obtaining a deposition from him in the presence of my father, who was a magistrate. At last, with a great sigh, Big Murty Mulligan opened his eyes, and feebly tried to spit the blood

from his mouth, and the sergeant beckoned Mike, who sat in silence by the turf fire, into the sick-room.

"Have ye anny charge to make agin this man?" asked the officer, as Mike stood sullenly gazing from his bandages at his foe. Murty turned his head slowly to look at him, and when their eyes met a scowl settled on his features, and he seemed about to speak; but the priest, who kneeled by his side, whispered something to him, and the scowl changed to a look of awe. From one to the other he looked, the awe and evil striving for mastery in his face, until at last he turned his face wearily to the wall and muttered:

"Lev me be awhile."

For nearly ten minutes no one stirred, and the silence was only broken by the low wailing of the mother and the muttered prayers of the kneeling priest. Then Big Murty turned his head slowly back and looked Mike full in the face with a scowl of intense hatred. Struggling to speak, he raised his clenched right hand on high to denounce his hated rival; but his mother, raising her head from the pillow, saw only the hand stretched above his head, and silently drawing a little crucifix from her bosom, put it into the tightly locked fingers that mechanically opened to clutch it. When he held it he glanced upwards, and again the awe filled his face, and he slowly drew it down until it was before his eyes. It was a little black cross, carved from bog oak, on which hung the body of the dead Christ, and as the dying man gazed at it, all the evil fled from his face, and great tears forced themselves from his swollen lids. For a minute he lay thus, until a great sob tore his bosom, and, kissing the cross, he looked up with eyes that were softened and sad, yet not altogether sad, and, speaking with a painful effort, said in a low, husky voice:

"Mike Doolan mustn't be bleamt fur this. 'Twas all me that done it to meself. Mikey, boy, will ye forgive me befor I go!"

At the first words Mike's face showed nothing but surprise, but when he heard the broken voice calling him by the old name he had not heard since they were boys together, he flung himself on his knees by the bedside with a choking cry, and seized the great brown hand that was extended to him.

"Whisht, Murty, avic," he cried; "sure I had murther in me heart, I had."

"'Twas me that vexed ye," said the other slowly; "an' I'd have kilt ye then, ony fur the boot av ye comin' off in me hans, glory be to God."

"Hould, hould, Murty, dear," sobbed Mike, with his head bowed low over his friend's hand. "Don't ye shpake like that. Sure God knows 'tis I had murther in me heart. Tell me ye have me forgiven, now!"

"'Tis ye that must tell that to me; 'twas I that vexed ye," repeated Murty. "Listen till I tell ye," continued he slowly. "I was comin' back from the cottage whin I met ye. Ye know what carried me there. Well, she towld me I had ne'er a chaunt at all wid her, and whin I got mad, an' ripped out a curse at ye, she up an' bid me git out av her sight altogether; an' thin I knew 'twas ye was the man, an' be the time I met ye on the cliff I was purty nigh mad, God forgive me."

"Sure He will, He will. God is good."

"Wait awhile; there's worse than that," said Murty feebly, wiping the bloody froth from his lips with the back of his hand. "Whin I opened me eyes here," he went on, after a pause, "an' seen ye stan'ing be the fat av the bed, the devil took hould av me agin, an' I knew if I towld thim that ye threw me down on the beach to murther me, that ye'd swing fur it sure, an' niwer git her after all. I made up me mind to accuse ye before thim all, an' I lying there wid me face to the wall; but whin I turned to tell the lie, wid me fist

up to hiven—God forgive me—I found the little crucifix in me han'; an' whin I took a look at it, an' seen the blessed Jesus wid his pore arms sthretched out to save us all, I—sure I couldn't do it—praise be to God, I couldn't do it."

There was a pause for a moment. Every one was now kneeling round the narrow bed.

"Give us a sup of cold wather, Mikey, boy," gasped Big-Murty. "I'm dyin' now, an' before I confess I want to make a will. Ye haven't much to support a wife, Mike, but I'll put ye in the way av it—please God. Will ye be so kind, sor," turning to my father, "as to write down on a bit av paper that Murty Mulligan wills the cutter below in the bay to Michael Doolan, an' all that's in her, along wid the two ounces av tobacco that's hid under a bucket benathe the tiller av her; an' keep her head a thrifle to the starboard, Mike, whin the wind's behind ye; she have a bad warrant to go shtraight."

Many a year has sped since the dying man sought to make reparation at the last, but if you stand in the breezy graveyard on a Sanday morning you will see the cutter below at her old moorings, resting after the week's work; and, when first mass is over, there are always two figures—a man and a woman—kneeling by yonder grave—praying for the soul of Big Murty Mulligan.

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